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CINCLANT FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV PREL CU
SUBJECT: CASTRO PROJECTING IMAGE OF OPTIMISM

¶11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

¶12. SUMMARY: A RECURRING THEME IN FIDEL CASTRO'S SPEECHES SINCE THE END OF THE OCHOA/ABRANTES SCANDALS LAST SUMMER HAS BEEN THAT THE TRAUMA HAS STRENGTHENED THE GOC RATHER THAN WEAKENED IT. KEEPING A HEAVY SCHEDULE OF VISITS TO CONSTRUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL SITES IN HAVANA AND CENTRAL CUBA, HE HAS CLAIMED THAT CUBA IS MAKING GREAT STRIDES TOWARD "DOING MORE WITH LESS" AND REMEDYING ITS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HE AND THE PARTY-CONTROLLED PRESS HAVE ALSO ENDEAVORED TO PORTRAY CUBA AS MUCH BETTER OFF THAN THOSE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES EXPERIMENTING WITH "UNWISE" POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS. COUNTERING AN IMPRESSION OF ISOLATION IN THE SOCIALIST WORLD, OFFICIAL MEDIA HAVE ALSO BEEN STRESSING CUBA'S CLOSE TIES TO GDR AND CHINA. THE JAWBONING WILL PROBABLY HAVE LIMITED EFFECT ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES. END SUMMARY.

¶13. FIDEL CASTRO HAS MADE, EVEN FOR HIM, A LARGE NUMBER OF PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND SPEECHES SINCE THE COMMUNIST PARTY DAILY, GRANMA, ON SEPTEMBER 2 DECLARED THE OCHOA/ABRANTES CASES CLOSED AND URGED THE NATION TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE LESSONS LEARNED OVER THE SUMMER. CASTRO HAS TRAVELED AROUND HAVANA, MATANZAS (AT THE VARADERO AIRPORT OPENING), AND THE CENTRAL CUBAN PROVINCE OF VILLA CLARA TO SPEAK MOSTLY TO CROWDS OF CONSTRUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL WORKERS. MOST OF THE SPEECHES HAVE BEEN BROADCAST OVER PRIME-TIME TV AND CARRIED IN GRANMA.

¶14. AT EACH STOP, CASTRO HAS BEEN PREACHING BASICALLY THE SAME LINE: CUBA HAS EMERGED FROM THE SCANDALS STRONGER THAN EVER AND IS MAKING IMPORTANT PROGRESS TOWARD RESOLVING THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS IT FACES. SPEAKING AT AN IMPROMPTU PRESS CONVERENCE AFTER A PEP TALK TO THE BLAS ROCA CONSTRUCTION CONTINGENT ON SEPTEMBER 30, CASTRO DECLARED THAT "THE SETBACKS WE HAD WERE TURNED INTO VICTORIES." HE WAS PARTICULARLY INTENT ON PORTRAYING THE "TRAUMATIC PROCESS" OF CLEANING UP THE INTERIOR MINISTRY (MININT) AS MAKING THE ORGANIZATION STRONGER, MORE DEDICATED AND MORE EFFICIENT. MININT IS NOW "DOING A GREAT JOB ...AND WILL BE A VERY IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT OF THE REVOLUTION."

¶15. CASTRO ALSO HAS STATED THAT CUBA "HAS FEWER PROBLEMS" THAN ANY OTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRY EXCEPT PERHAPS NORTH KOREA. HE HAS REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED DISDAIN FOR THE REFORMS OF THE "BEGINNER CAPITALISTS" AND "BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATS" IN EASTERN EUROPE (I.E., PRO-REFORM SOVIETS, POLES AND HUNGARIANS). THE CUBAN MEDIA, TAKING CASTRO'S CUE, HAVE PUBLISHED ARTICLES ALMOST DAILY DEPICTING THE CHAOS CAUSED BY THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

REFORMS IN THOSE COUNTRIES. ON A TYPICAL DAY, GRANMA REPORTS ON THE SOVIET UNION'S NATIONALIST AND LABOR STRIFE, POLAND'S SERIOUS ECONOMIC PLIGHT, AND HUNGARY'S DESTABILIZING SHIFT TOWARD A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM.

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16. CUBA, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS DOING QUITE WELL, ACCORDING TO CASTRO. WHILE REMAINING LOYAL TO SOCIALIST PRECEPTS, IT IS "DOING MORE WITH LESS." HAVANA HAS FEWER RESOURCES THAN EVER BEFORE AND ONLY HALF THE FOREIGN RESERVES IT USED TO HAVE, CASTRO SAID, BUT THE NATION IS "COMPENSATING WITH THE SPIRIT OF WORK." TO COUNTER THE IMPRESSION OF CUBA'S ISOLATION IN THE SOCIALIST WORLD, CASTRO AND THE MEDIA HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE COUNTRY'S RELATIONS WITH CLOSE AND HELPFUL ALLIES. THE GOC HAS SENT DELEGATIONS TO EAST GERMANY, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, BULGARIA, LIBYA AND NORTH KOREA IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS TO FIRM UP BILATERAL TIES. CUBA HAS INVESTED PARTICULAR ENERGY IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, HAILING EVERY DEVELOPMENT (INCLUDING CASTRO'S ATTENDANCE AT THE CHINESE NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION IN HAVANA) AS A SIGN OF CLOSER TIES.

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17. AT THE SAME TIME, CASTRO IS PROJECTING OPTIMISM IN HIS ABILITY TO COUNTER WHAT THE GOC IS BILLING AS A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN U.S. AGGRESSION AGAINST CUBA: THE LAUNCHING OF TV MARTI. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION AT THE SEPTEMBER 30 PRESS CONFERENCE, CASTRO SAID CUBA HAD A STRONG FIGHTING SPIRIT AND WAS READY TO "GIVE A GOOD CHUNK OF IT TO THOSE YANKIS." WHILE SAYING THIS, HE FORMED HIS HANDS INTO A SHAPE SUGGESTING A GUN AIMED AT AN IMAGINARY TARGET IN THE SKY.

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18. CASTRO HAS EVEN BOASTED ABOUT HIS HEALTH. HE ADMITTED THAT LAST SUMMER'S SCANDALS CAUSED HIM GREAT BITTERNESS, BUT HE SAID HE DID NOT LET IT OVERCOME HIM. "I ACTED WITH EQUANIMITY," HE SAID, ADDING, "I AM VERY WELL. I WORK A LOT BUT THIS IS COMPENSATED BY THE SATISFACTION I FEEL WHEN I SEE THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE EVERYWHERE."

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19. COMMENT: GROUPS LIKE THE BLAS ROCA CONTINGENT, A MODEL WORK UNIT THAT ENJOYS PREFERENTIAL ACCESS TO HOUSING AND FOOD, ARE AMONG THE MOST LIKELY TO ACCEPT CASTRO'S OPTIMISTIC "MAKE-DO" ASSESSMENT, AS ARE OTHER WORKERS IN PRIORITY INDUSTRIES THAT THE COMANDANTE HAS BEEN VISITING. OVERALL, HOWEVER, THE JAWBONING WILL LIKELY HAVE LITTLE EFFECT. THE MESSAGE IS THAT DOMESTIC POLICIES WILL REMAIN BASICALLY UNCHANGED AND THAT THE COUNTRY WILL SIMPLY TIGHTEN ITS BELT. NEITHER THIS NOR THE NEWS THAT MININT WILL NOW BE EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE THAN IN THE PAST ARE LIKELY TO INSPIRE JOY. STILL, CASTRO IS TRYING TO MAKE A VIRTUE OF THE FACT THAT DESPITE SHORTAGES IN CUBA OF FLOUR, GASOLINE, MEDICINES, AND MANY OTHER ITEMS, THE PEOPLE REMAIN FED AND AT WORK AND THERE IS NO INFLATION NOR SOCIAL "DISINTEGRATION" AS IN THE "BEGINNING CAPITALIST" STATES.

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110. CASTRO'S PUBLIC PUSH ALSO SUGGESTS AN EAGERNESS TO REPAIR THE PRESTIGE -- THE "MAGIC HOLD" HE HAS ENJOYED OVER HIS PEOPLE -- THAT APPARENTLY WAS ERODED BY LAST SUMMER'S SCANDALS.

TAYLOR